

# Core standard five

Promote effective people  
management

## Why good people management matters for mental health

Line managers and coaches play a crucial role in workplace wellbeing. Research shows that good line management is linked with good health, wellbeing and improved performance. Meanwhile, poor quality leadership has been linked with stress, burnout and depression.

**I can't speak highly enough of the support I have received from my line manager regarding my mental health problems. He has always sought to understand how he can best help me on both a professional and personal level, and thanks to him I've never felt under additional pressure from work when I have been struggling. He doesn't judge me, he values my contribution and he trusts me to do what I need to do to manage my mental health. His support has made a big difference to me.**

– Regional Manager, National Governing Body of Sport

Investing in good people management doesn't have to be complex or expensive. At its heart it is about considering all employees, volunteers and athletes as people, not resources or a set of performance statistics. Developing a management style that's open, approachable and self-aware goes a long way to improving team members' wellbeing and performance.

**“ We ask managers to always put wellbeing on the agenda in one-to-ones. It doesn't need to be formalised, but it's ensuring managers feel empowered to have what can be fairly candid conversations. ”**

– Ben Jessup, Policy Advisor,  
Sport and Recreation Alliance

## Equipping line managers and coaches

The way you manage and support people experiencing a mental health problem can be key in shaping how they cope and recover. Your organisation should:

- provide training on mental health and stress management – including how to spot the signs and how to have supportive conversations
- have clear guidelines for line managers and coaches on how to support people with mental health problems
- encourage and enable positive line manager and coach behaviours.

“ [The training] has had a significant effect on how we consider the impact of mental health. It’s been conducted in a sensitive, relevant and engaging manner and had a really positive impact on those involved. Often the most difficult part is starting a conversation about mental health. But taking the stigma out of this for colleagues is really important and we are now much more aware of the warning signs and what we can do to support colleagues. A big thank you to Mind for the work they have done in supporting our organisation on this vital part of our learning journey. ”

– Damian Stevenson, Insight and Partnerships  
Director, Swim England

## Useful resources

### Managing mental health at work training

This training course will upskill anyone whose role includes line managing, supervising, coaching or developing people at work. Participants learn how to recognise when a team member is struggling and how to support them professionally. You can sign up to publicly available courses or contact our training team about in-house delivery in your workplace.

### People managers' guide to mental health

This guide for managers was jointly developed by Mind and the CIPD to improve support for those experiencing stress and mental health problems. It sets out the practical steps that employers can take to create a mentally healthy workplace and to help prevent poor wellbeing in the first place. It is designed to support anyone involved in managing people. We also hope it will be a useful professional resource for HR and occupational health teams.<sup>19</sup>

### Questions from line managers

Our expert panel answers the most commonly asked questions from line managers<sup>20</sup> about supporting employees with a mental health problem.

### Support for coaches and physical activity providers

Watch three short films with advice and support for inclusive coaching<sup>21</sup>.

### The Mind Infoline

As well as supporting people living with mental health problems, we can provide advice on managing and supporting mental health at work. Call 0300 123 3393, email [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk) or text 86463.

19 [www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/mental-health-support-report](http://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/mental-health-support-report)

20 [www.mind.org.uk/media/43330/line\\_manager\\_Webinar\\_FAQs\\_final.pdf](http://www.mind.org.uk/media/43330/line_manager_Webinar_FAQs_final.pdf)

21 [www.mind.org.uk/about-us/our-policy-work/sport-physical-activity-and-mental-health/coaches-page/](http://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/our-policy-work/sport-physical-activity-and-mental-health/coaches-page/)

# Core Standard five: employer tools

## Checklist for line managers and coaches

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### 1 Build your confidence on mental health

Familiarise yourself with your organisation's mental health policies and practices and the ways people can seek confidential advice and support.

### 2 Normalise mental health

Touch base regularly with your people to check how they're getting on and think about what might be causing them stress. Create space for them to ask questions and raise issues, and give them permission to talk about home as well as work issues if they wish.

### 3 Take stock of mental health

Include an agenda item at team meetings to give people the opportunity to discuss their wellbeing, and what factors are affecting it, if they would like to. This helps create a space where mental health is normalised, but it's important not to force disclosure. Everyone should have the option to share or not to share.

### 4 Come together as a team

A team planning session can look at any issues in detail and develop a joint action plan to address them. If you run a people survey, this could form the basis of the discussion.

### 5 Celebrate individual and team successes

Create space at team meetings to give positive feedback and recognise achievements.

### 6 Encourage employee engagement

Promote a culture of open dialogue and involve employees in decisions about how the team is run and how they do their job. Make sure employees understand their role in the bigger picture and make it clear how they contribute to the organisation's vision and aims.



# Talking to people about their mental health: ten tips for line managers and coaches

## 1 Choose an appropriate place

Ideally somewhere private and quiet where the person feels comfortable and equal.

## 2 Encourage people to talk

Ask simple, open and non-judgmental questions and let people explain in their own words how their mental health problem manifests, what triggers it, how it affects their work and what support they need.

## 3 Don't make assumptions

Many people can manage their mental health and perform to a high standard but may need support during difficult periods.

## 4 Listen to people and respond flexibly

Adapt your support to suit the individual. Involve people as much as possible in finding solutions to any difficulties they have.

## 5 Be honest and clear

If there are specific concerns, like high absence levels or reduced performance, it's important to address them early.

## 6 Ensure confidentiality

Sensitive information should be shared with as few people as possible. Discuss what information they would like shared and with whom. Develop policies for line managers and coaches to follow.

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### Develop an action plan

Work with your employee to develop an individual action plan which identifies the signs of their mental health problem, triggers for stress, the possible impact on their work, who to contact in a crisis and what support they need. Learn about Wellbeing Action Plans on [page 35](#).

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### Encourage people to seek advice and support

You're not expected to be an employee's only source of mental health support. People should speak to their GP to access help from the NHS such as talking therapy. If your organisation has an Employee Assistance Programme it may be able to arrange counselling.

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### Seek advice and support yourself

Our [Mind Infolines](#) and network of [local Minds](#) can provide information to employers, too. Occupational Health (if you have it) can provide tailored advice to support both employers and employees. If relationships have become strained or confrontational mediation can help – some local Minds run mediation services, as does the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service ([ACAS](#)). Small businesses can access the free [Health for Work Advice Line](#) service provided by NHS occupational health services.

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### Reassure people

They may not always be ready to talk straight away. So it's important that you explain the support that is available. Tell them your door is always open and let them know you'll make sure they get the help they need.